Planning 

Excerpt from Fostering Collaboration Between District and Charter Schools:   
A Toolkit for State and Local Leaders

Sara Allender, Andrea Browning, Robin Chait, Chris Dwyer, Carol Keirstead, and Amanda Nabors

**Description:**  
Joint planning is key to the success of district-charter collaboration. This section outlines steps that are found in effective planning processes and provides tools that can be used in carrying them out.

* [Download the full publication](https://www.wested.org/resources/district-charter-schools-toolkit/)
* [Browse WestEd resources](https://www.wested.org/resources/)
* [Visit WestEd.org](http://www.wested.org/)
* [Subscribe to the WestEd E-Bulletin](https://www.wested.org/subscribe/)

RECOMMENDED CITATION:

Allender, S., Browning, A., Chait, R., Dwyer, C., Keirstead, C., & Nabors, A. (2019). Planning. In *Fostering collaboration between district and charter schools: A toolkit for state and local leaders* (pp. 18–24) *.* San Francisco, CA: WestEd. Retrieved from: <https://www.wested.org/resources/district-charter-schools-toolkit/>

About WestEd

WestEd is a nonpartisan, nonprofit research, development, and service agency that works with education and other communities throughout the United States and abroad to promote excellence, achieve equity, and improve learning for children, youth, and adults. WestEd has more than a dozen offices nationwide, from Massachusetts, Vermont, Georgia, and Washington, DC, to Arizona and California, with headquarters in San Francisco.

Areas of Work

* College & Career
* Early Childhood Development & Learning
* English Language Learners
* Health, Safety, & Well-Being
* Literacy
* School, Districts, & State Education Systems
* Science, Technology, Engineering, & Mathematics
* Special Education
* Standards, Assessment, & Accountability
* Teachers & Leaders

Limited Electronic and Print Distribution Rights

This document is protected by copyright law as indicated in a notice appearing later in this work. This file is provided for non-commercial use only. Permission to reproduce and adapt this excerpt with WestEd attribution is hereby granted. For more information, email [permissions@WestEd.org](mailto:permissions@WestEd.org).

Planning  
from Fostering Collaboration Between District and Charter Schools

A Toolkit for State and Local Leaders

## C. Planning

Joint planning is key to the success of district-charter collaboration. It is particularly important because of the complexities of working across multiple organizations and the need to plan both for development of the capacity to collaborate and for the work to be accomplished through collaboration. This section outlines steps that are found in effective planning processes, along with tools that can be used in carrying them out.

**Understanding the Problem.** An important, and sometimes overlooked, step in embarking on a planning process is diagnosing the problems or opportunities that, if appropriately taken advantage of, will lead to desired changes. Getting the problem right is a first and critical step in determining the focus of collaborative work. Once a unifying purpose or need has been identified as the catalyst for collaborative action, partners come together to understand what is at the root of the issue or problem they will work to solve.

*Root-cause analysis* is a collection of principles, techniques, and methodologies that can be leveraged to identify the root causes of an event or trend. Looking beyond superficial cause and effect, root-cause analysis can reveal where processes or systems failed or caused an issue in the first place.

A commonly used method of root-cause analysis is identifying the “5 Whys” of the problem or issue at hand. In its simplest form, planners ask themselves “why?” five times when they’re confronted with a problem. Asking “why” repeatedly directs one’s focus toward root causes, enabling problems to be solved and solutions to be found in a long-term, sustainable way.[[1]](#footnote-1) To identify the 5 Whys for your local context, see *Getting the Problem Right: Template for the 5 Whys Root-Cause Analysis* on page 21 in the Related Tools section below.

Another root-cause analysis process uses a fishbone diagram, which is a more structured visual tool for brainstorming causes of a problem. Regardless of which process is used, partners should identify observable causes that a collaborative effort could address.

**Developing a Logic Model.**Logic models are detailed schematics of intentions that enable teams to map out the big picture — the what (i.e., the overarching problem or issue being addressed) and the how (i.e., the key steps that will lead to desired outcomes). Logic models help to conceptualize and communicate change efforts. In their logic models, teams/partners should articulate their understanding of the current situation, changes they hope to bring about through their program efforts, activities that are planned to contribute toward these changes, resources needed for the effort, assumptions they are making, and any external factors that could influence results. Having a logic model also lays a foundation for assessing results over time. The Related Tools section includes a *Sample Logic Model Template* (page 23). In addition, the [W.K. Kellogg Foundation Logic Model Development Guide](https://www.wkkf.org/resource-directory/resource/2006/02/wk-kellogg-foundation-logic-model-development-guide) is a comprehensive guide that provides logic models that can be used for various purposes.[[2]](#footnote-2)

**Creating a Plan of Action.** If you have developed a logic model, you have already identified your goals and outcomes, so you are halfway toward creating a Plan of Action.An *Action Planning Template* (page 24) that can be amended to suit the purpose of a planning team is included in the Related Tools section. The template includes the following elements:

* **Action Steps:***What specific steps will be taken?*
* **Responsibilities:** *Who will do what?*
* **Timeline:***When will the tasks be completed?*
* **Resources:***What resources are needed? What do you have? What do you need?*
* **Potential Barriers:***What barriers do you anticipate? Think about actions needed to address them.*
* **Communications Plan:***An oft-forgotten and very important question to ask consistently is: With whom do we need to communicate about this — how and when?*
* **Evidence of Success:***How will you know that you are making progress? What are your benchmarks?*

**Evaluation Process:***How will you determine that your goal has been reached? What are your measures?*

For district-charter collaborations, there are two important additional planning considerations: developing the capacity to collaborate and determining the appropriate scope of work. **Developing the capacity to collaborate** effectively requires fostering appropriate mindsets, dispositions, and skills. When bringing individuals from various organizations together to collaborate for a mutual purpose, it is important to assess individuals’ and groups’ capacity to collaborate, then plan how to further develop that capacity through professional development, protocols, or other strategies.

During the planning phase, district-charter collaborations should also **determine a scope of work** that is discrete and manageable in light of available capacities. Defining a “right-sized” scope of work is critical to successful collaboration. A scope of work that is too ambitious may collapse under the weight of its potential. Conversely, a scope of work that is not ambitious enough may never take flight.[[3]](#footnote-3) That said, in instances where collaboration is new or potentially fraught with tension, organizations are encouraged to initially identify “easy wins” from which they can build momentum for future collaborations.

Related Tools for Planning

These three tools are designed to help entities plan and implement effective collaborations. The first tool, *Getting the Problem Right: Template for the 5 Whys Root-Cause Analysis* is for identifying what is at the root of the problem. The second is a *Sample Logic Model Template* that can be used to develop a logic model that articulates and conceptualizes the theory of action. The third is an *Action Planning Template* that can be used or adapted to develop an action plan for the collaborative activity.

Getting the Problem Right: Template for the 5 Whys Root-Cause Analysis

***Instructions.***[[4]](#footnote-4) Instructions for going through the 5 Whys are provided below, followed by a template that can be used or adapted to record your team’s work. (You may prefer to use Post-it Notes to map out your responses rather than using the template. Using Post-its allows groups more flexibility in refining and updating their answers as they reflect, discuss, and make connections across contributing factors.)

1. Before you begin asking “Why,” state the problem your collaboration is seeking to address. Try to be as specific as you can, given what you know and have data to support.
2. Ask the first why. Why is this problem occurring? Search for answers that are grounded in facts and record the sources of information leading you to identify the reason.
3. Building on your answer from step 2, ask the next why. Why is the answer that you identified in step 2 a factor contributing to the problem? Again, indicate sources of information.
4. Building on each successive answer that you’ve identified, ask whys 3–5. Continue to probe for each factor identified as contributing to the one before. Note your sources of information.
5. When you have exhausted contributing factors, identify those factors that (a) collaborative effort is best suited to address and (b) would solve the problem if addressed successfully.

Problem Statement (one-sentence description of the problem):

| 5 Whys | Reason why problem is occurring | How do we know?  Observable, data-based evidence |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1. Why |  |  |
| 2. Why |  |  |
| 3. Why |  |  |
| 4. Why |  |  |
| 5. Why |  |  |

Root Cause(s)

Once you feel you have gotten to root causes (i.e., why the problem is occurring), record those that you believe are best suited for district-charter collaborative action. Restate the data that tell you these are root causes for the problem. To validate root causes, ask the following: If you removed this root cause, would the problem be prevented?

| Root Cause(s) | How do we know?  Observable, data-based evidence |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

SAMPLE LOGIC MODEL TEMPLATE

The Problem

This is a statement of the problem we propose to address through cross-sector collaboration. Include data to the extent possible.

| INPUTS/RESOURCES  In order to accomplish our set of activities, we will need the following: | ACTIVITIES  In order to address our problem, we will need to carry out the following activities: | OUTPUTS  Once we carry out our activities, we will have the following evidence of service delivery (e.g., policies, guidance, tools): | OUTCOMES  We expect that, if accomplished, we will achieve these short-term (1‑year) and long-term (3‑year) changes: | IMPACT  We expect that if we accomplish our short- and long-term outcomes, we will see the following results: |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |

**Enabling Factors/Conditions** (Factors that advance the work)

**Constraining Factors/Conditions** (Potential obstacles and challenges)

ACTION PLANNING TEMPLATE

Once partners have identified root causes of the problem they are committing to address, they can begin to develop action plans to accomplish their goals. Each goal should have its own action plan.

**Goal:** It is always best to identify a goal that is Strategic, Measurable, Attainable, Results-Oriented, and Timebound (SMART).

**Outcomes:** Statements that describe the observable, measurable changes that will be achieved as the result of this work.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Action Steps What will be done to achieve the goal? | Responsibilities Who will do it? | Timeline  By when? (Day/month) | Resources Available | Resources Needed Financial, human, political & other | Potential Barriers  What individuals or organizations might resist? | Potential Barriers  How might there be resistance? | Communications Plan Who is involved? What methods to communicate? How often? |
| Step 1: |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Step 2: |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Step 3: |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Step 4: |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Step 5: |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Evidence of Success:** (How will you know that you are making progress toward your goal? What are your benchmarks?)

**Evaluation Process:** (How will you determine that your goal has been reached? What are your measures?)

1. Vajda, P. (2016, October). Root cause problem-solving. *Management Issues.* Retrieved from <https://www.management-issues.com/opinion/6767/root-cause-problem-solving/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. W.K. Kellogg Foundation. (2004). *W.K. Kellogg Foundation logic model development guide.*Battle Creek, MI: W.K. Kellogg Foundation.Retrieved at <https://www.wkkf.org/resource-directory/resource/2006/02/wk-kellogg-foundation-logic-model-development-guide> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Hansen, M. (2009). *Collaboration: How leaders avoid the traps, create unity, and reap big results*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. More detailed instructions for implementing the 5 Whys process can be found at <https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMC_5W.htm> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)